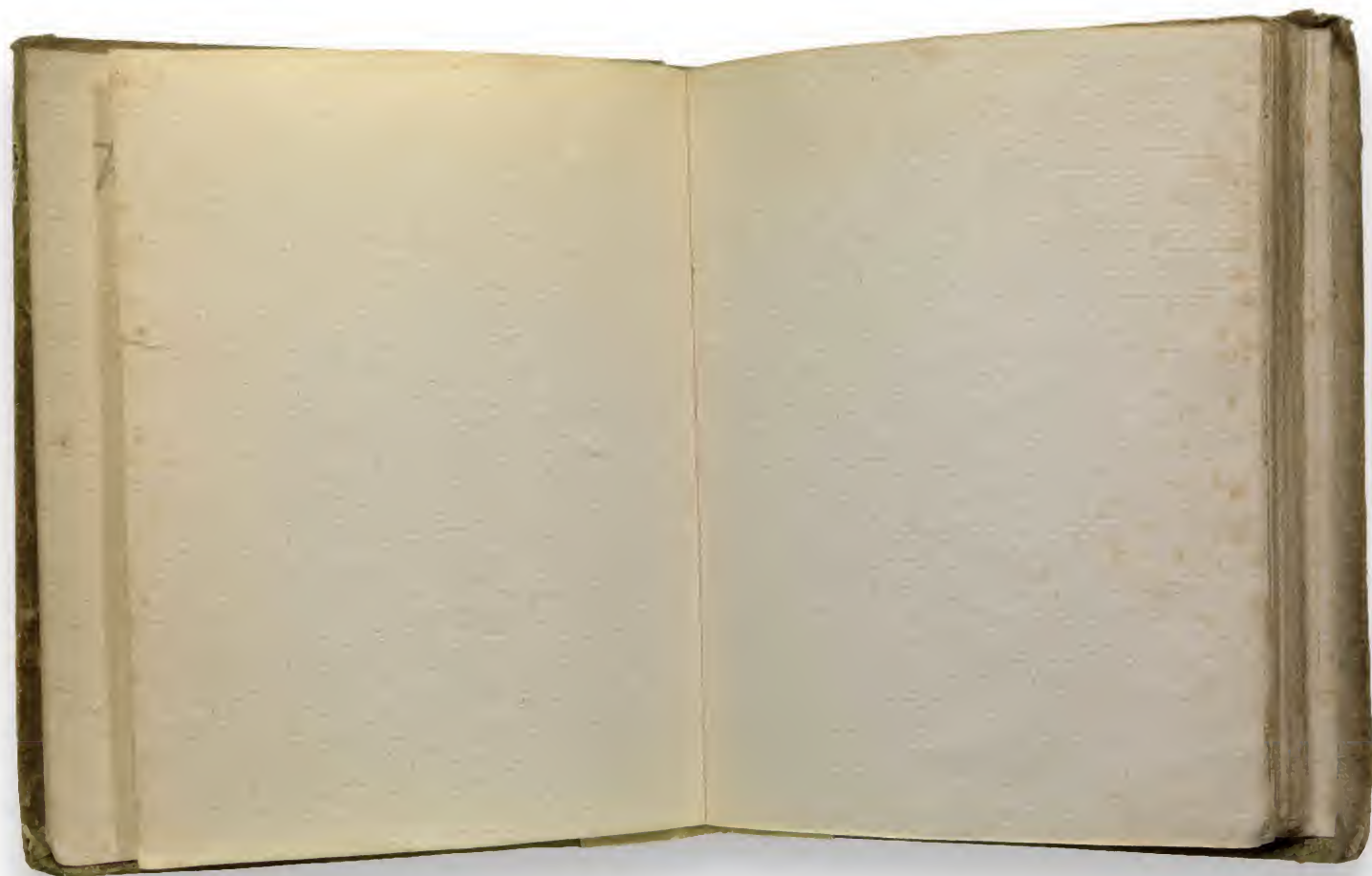
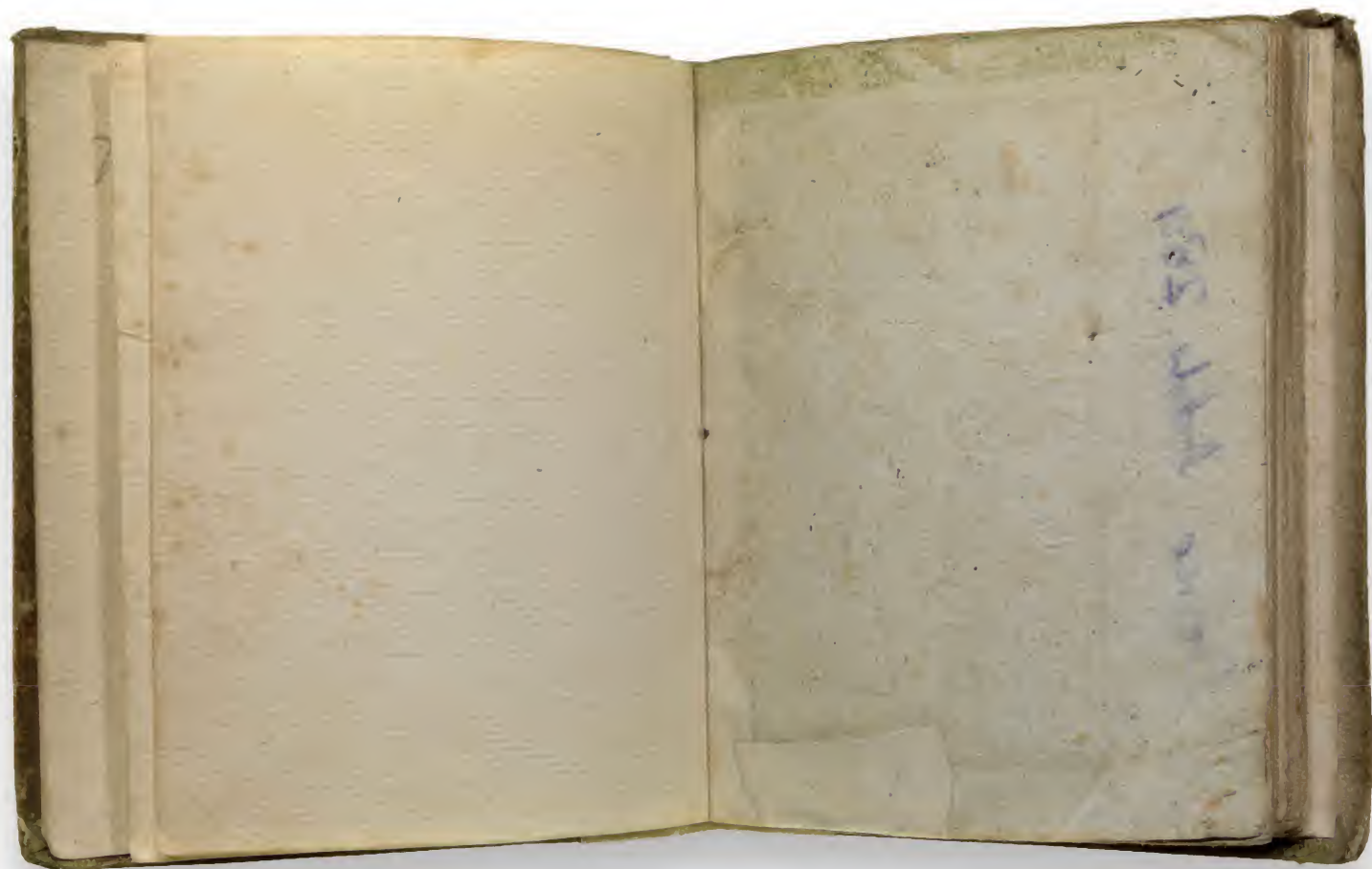




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James THE *Haswell*
HISTORY 1799
OF
JOSEPH.

Compiled in an Easy and Familiar Way,

FOR
The ENTERTAINMENT and INSTRUCTION
OF
YOUTH.

INTERSPERSED WITH MORAL REFLECTIONS.

Follow his Steps, ye Youth, who wish to rise
To Honour here, or Bliss beyond the Skies.

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Dance Adds. 289

P R E F A C E.

THE same God who made the world, sustains and governs the works of his own hands. The providence of God is as obvious, as his existence. He did not speak things into being, and then leave them to chance ; but his eye directs, and his hand regulates what his power at first created. " The Lord reigneth," is a truth which will be acknowledged while there is a thinking, and contemplative man in the world. Upon no other principle can we rationally account for past events, or present occurrences. The bible affords us innumerable proofs of this fact ; and among the rest, none more striking than the history of Joseph, which is contained in the following sheets, and claims the attention of every reader. A proper observance of the providence

dence of God, either respecting ourselves, or others, will teach us submission to his will. Many quarrel with God, for want of duly attending to the leadings of his providence, but when we consider, that whether prosperity or adversity, health or sickness be our state, the whole is directed by God's unerring wisdom, and designed to promote his glory; and the good of his creatures. This will explain difficulties, silence murmurings, dispel our fears, alleviate our sorrows, and tend to produce contentment in that situation wherein the Lord has placed us.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,

He

He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour :
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain :
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

'Tis true, there are mysteries in providence, as expressed in the above lines ; but such is the wisdom of God, that even the designs and conduct of his enemies, shall eventually promote his glory, and accomplish his all-wise purposes. In the history of Joseph, this observation is remarkably verified. Who could have conceived, that such

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begin-

beginning would have produced such important ends. His envious brethren had no such view as the deliverance of themselves and families, when they sold him for a slave ; but God designed this, and proved by the issue, that the greatest events are sometimes accomplished by the most unlikely means. Let the young reader well consider this remarkable history, and imitate the pleasing youth, who, for his serious and moral deportment, at the early age of seventeen, was exposed to the hatred and malice of wicked men. View him also in his patience under sufferings, his chastity in temptation, and in his steady perseverance in the path of virtue. In his whole life we behold the marks of grace, and the superintending providence of God with him, nor was he forsaken by the Lord in his death. He found, what I pray my reader may experience, that an holy life will issue in an happy death.

The History of Joseph.



CHAP. I.

Particulars relating to the Birth and Childhood of Joseph, &c. &c.

THE subject of the present Memoirs, descended from a very ancient family. His great-grandfather was Abraham, who, on ac-

count of his exceeding piety, is to this day called *The father of the faithful*. The religion of that great man appears to have been preserved in this line: for Isaac, who was the grandfather of Joseph, and Jacob his father, were both renowned for their steady adherence to the worship of Jehovah. Indeed, in that age, when men called images of wood and stone their gods, and worshipped them as such, those persons who dared to reject and oppose their impious customs, were deserving of the highest regard.

Joseph was the first of Rachel's children, but the youngest, excepting one, of his father Jacob's family.

His mother died when he was very young; and there is reason to suppose that he had no recollection of her person. However, though he was deprived of a pious and tender mother, he enjoyed the peculiar care of a very affectionate father.

And perhaps it was on account of the love he bore to Rachel, that Jacob delighted more in this son than in all his other children. Those parents are not to be commended who set more value upon some of their children than others, as it frequently produces a great deal of distress afterwards; which we shall perceive was the case in this family. We must confess, however, that Jacob had great reason to be pleased with Joseph, who was a very wise and good child, and loved to listen to his father's instructions, which we have reason to fear, his brothers did not; for you ought to understand, that Jacob had twelve sons, whose names were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin. Indeed the last cannot be included in our observations on the other brethren at present, as he was at this time too young to be much noticed in history.

Joseph at times told his father of the wicked things which his brothers did, when they were out of Jacob's sight. We hope that he did this, that their father might reprove them for their evil, and so prevent their ruin; for otherwise it is very wrong for children to tell tales of each other, that themselves might be preferred. This conduct made his brothers hate him very much; and their hatred was increased by two circumstances, which we must mention before we conclude this chapter. Jacob procured for his son Joseph, a very handsome coat, ornamented with figures or flowers of various colours, by which he was easily distinguished from the rest of his sons, which was also a mark of partiality, that they could not approve of. Besides this, Joseph had two very extraordinary dreams, which seemed to portend some future station of greatness, to which he should arrive. These dreams we must introduce in our next chapter.

CHAP.



CHAP. II.

Containing an Account of Joseph's Dreams, and the Malice of his Brothers, &c.

JOSEPH was now seventeen years of age, a time when young persons are apt to form very high expectations of their future life. And whatever Providence may design for them, they too

too frequently, at this period, make more haste to obtain the object of their wishes than is proper. It is no wonder therefore that the dreams just mentioned made a very great impression on Joseph's mind. Suspecting no evil, and meaning no harm, he exultingly told his brethren: " In my sleep I dreamed that we were employed in gathering the fruits of the field; we had each bound up a sheaf of corn, and laid them on the ground; when, to my great surprize, they all arose as if they had been endued with animal life; mine stood in the middle, and yours, having formed a circle round it, bowed and rendered homage to it." You may imagine, my dear reader, what an effect this speech would have on his envious brethren. They one and all cried, " Thou contemptible being, dost thou think to reign over us?" But the good nature and innocence of Joseph prevented him from resenting this abusive language; and, in the most artless way he recited to them

another

another dream which he had:—" I dreamed (said he) a more strange dream than the first; for I saw the Sun and Moon and eleven Stars; and they made obeisance, and intimated their subjection to me." " What! (exclaimed his brethren) shall thy Father and Mother, and eleven Brethren bow down to thee!" And on account of these dreams they plotted his destruction; which we shall relate more particularly in the next chapter, and conclude the present, by observing—That young persons ought not in general to take any notice of their dreams, as they are, for the most part, only the productions of a roving fancy, pursuing incoherently transactions that are past. Nevertheless, Almighty God has sometimes revealed his will to his servants, in extraordinary cases, in this way.

CHAP.



CHAP. III.

*Joseph sold by his Brethren into Egypt, and their
false Representations to his Father, &c.*

JACOB, possessing large flocks and herds, to the care and improvement of which he had trained up his sons, was obliged at times to send them to feed at considerable distances from his

his own habitation. It chanced on a time that these flocks were under the care of his ten sons at Shechem, a place of rich pasture, but some miles from home. Probably therefore they might be absent from their father for several days. The good old man, whatever partiality he might shew to Joseph, was much concerned for the welfare of all his children. So after they had been some time away, he sent Joseph to enquire after their welfare, and to see the state of the flocks, and bring him word. Joseph went, and pursued his journey through many a fertile vale, and over delightful hills; the Sun, which had just appeared in the East, when he set out from home, had gained the meridian, and scorched the earth with its noontide beams; yea, it declined towards the West, and almost threatened to leave the world to darkness, before he had accomplished his design. But a man having met him wandering, directed him to Dothan, where his brethren had just removed

moved their flocks. Before he reached the place, they saw him coming, and finding him alone, they immediately consulted how they might destroy him. I make no doubt, my young friends, but you are astonished at the wickedness of these brothers; but alas, who knows to what lengths persons will go, when they have hardened their hearts against God! Those who envy their brother, when he is in prosperity, will do more than that when they have it in their power, if the providence of God does not prevent them. But it seems, Reuben, the eldest brother, was not quite so hardhearted as the others, and refused his concurrence in the bloody design. And in order to prevent it from being put into execution, he proposed to let him down into a pit, pretending that he might starve there, and they not imbrue their hands in his blood. Though Reuben's design really was to rescue him, and deliver him to his father. But this project was overruled, for just
after

after they had cast him into the pit, a large company of foreign merchantmen came by, who were ready to purchase slaves: and to these men they agreed to sell poor Joseph: and having stripped him of his coat of many colours, they killed a kid, and daubed it with the blood, and then took it home to their father, and pretended they found that coat in this condition, in the wilderness; from whence it was concluded, that some wild beast had devoured Joseph. But O, how cruel must these men be, who could put their poor old father to so much pain, as such a dreadful account of his son's end must occasion! It would have been no wonder if good Jacob had broken his aged heart. Learn then, ye children, to value the happiness of your parents, and let not your conduct wound their spirits.

CHAP. IV.

Joseph's Journey into Egypt, and his Circumstances there, &c.

WE left old Jacob in great distress, on account of the supposed death of his son. With an heart overcharged with grief, and eyes flowing with tears, he spent many a painful day and sleepless night.

Joseph the meanwhile was conducted as a common slave to the chief city of Egypt. Here, it is true, he had an opportunity of seeing magnificence, which till now he was quite unacquainted with. But such sights must be better calculated to increase, than alleviate his misery. We may picture to ourselves the situation of the young man, without friend or protector, exposed in the common market place to the insults of the surrounding

rounding croud, and offered to sale by a master, whose cruelty could only be exceeded by that of his brothers, who betrayed him into his hands.

The beauty of his person, and the gracefulness of his deportment, took the attention of one of King Pharaoh's Captains, whose name was Potiphar. This man wanting a servant, immediately purchased the *Hebrew Captive*, for by that term Joseph was now called. Thus our hero entered upon his state of servitude, which, if viewed in a proper light, is certainly one of the most illustrious periods of his life. His assiduity and abilities not only gained him the affection, but the confidence of his master; and to use the words of the sacred historian, "The Lord was with him, and made whatever he did to prosper."

Indeed, whatever some wicked men may say, they are the most likely to be good servants, who
fear

fear God ; and masters, who have such in their houses, do frequently reap the advantage of their piety, though they may be ignorant of it.—But to return to Joseph. His goodness of disposition was soon the means of his promotion ; but his prosperity would certainly have been his ruin, had he not been endowed with very singular grace. Potiphar's wife was a beautiful, but a wicked woman. Her impudent temptation of Joseph ought to warn young persons to be very circumspect in their conduct.

There are many things, which may tend to overcome us in the hour of temptation, and these were all united in the case of Joseph. Natural passions, a desirable object, and convenient opportunity, when combined, are not easily resisted ; but in the midst of all, the reflection this young man made, has a blessed tendency to preserve him from

from evil :—"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God !"

By this, Joseph became victorious : Oh, that you, my dear young reader, may be made so too, if you are ever exposed to temptation !



CHAP.



CHAP. V.

Joseph's Imprisonment, &c.

THIS base woman, when she could not obtain her ends, accused Joseph of the very crime of which she alone was guilty; and her enraged husband bound him in fetters, and put him in prison. Learn then, not to wonder, if wicked persons

persons accuse you of those things of which you are most innocent.

Now you may well imagine, Joseph would have some melancholy reflections on the cruelty of his brethren, and the distress he might well suppose his father to be in. His only employment could now be to walk among his fellow prisoners, or look through the iron grates of his gloomy dungeon. Yet we have reason to admire the providence which preserved his life, from the fury of his persecutors.

In this prison also, two of the King's servants, his butler, and his baker, were confined. What was the cause of their imprisonment, we cannot tell, as the historian has not recorded the particulars of it. These two men dreamed remarkable dreams on the same night; and in the morning told them to Joseph. The baker said, "I dreamt that I was at liberty, and had three baskets on my head,

B

head,

head, filled with sweet-meats, and dainties for Pharaoh. And the birds eat them out of the uppermost basket, as I passed along." The butler said, " I dreamed that I stood before a beautiful vine, which had three branches loaded with clusters of ripe grapes ; and I took a golden cup, and pressed the juice of the grapes into the cup, and delivered it into Pharaoh's hand."

And Joseph said, " This dream portends, that Pharaoh will forgive you, and in three days you will be put in the same office, which you held before ; but do not forget me, when you are at liberty, but speak for me to Pharaoh, that I may be released out of this dungeon ; for indeed I have done nothing to deserve this imprisonment."

But to the baker, Joseph said, " It will be very different with you. Pharaoh will certainly release you in three days, but it will only be to put you to an ignominious death ; for he will hang you upon a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh."

CHAP.



CHAP. VI.

Pharaoh's Dreams, and Joseph's Release.

THE interpretations of the foregoing dreams were proved to be true. In three days the baker was hanged, and the butler restored to his place. But alas, the butler entirely forgot Joseph ! This should teach us, that the best of men may

B 2

expect

expect ungrateful returns from those to whom they have displayed the greatest regard.

Providence, however, made a way for Joseph's release. Pharaoh dreamt one night two very remarkable dreams. He imagined, that he was walking by the River Nile, admiring the smooth bosom of the water, or pleased with the rapidity of its current; when suddenly seven beasts appeared on its banks, that were fat and beautiful to the eye, and seemed fit to be slain for food. Seven other beasts followed them, that were thin and ill favoured; and these devoured the beasts that went before. In his second dream, he thought himself walking in the fields, in harvest time, and he observed seven ears of corn, growing on one stalk, large and brown; and on another stalk, were seven small and blasted ears, which appeared to eat up the fine ears of corn, he at first saw.

Pharaoh

Pharaoh told all his servants these dreams, and made enquiry after those persons who were likely to interpret them. This circumstance, brought to the mind of his butler, his former companion in the prison; and he immediately mentioned the case of Joseph to the King, and recommended him as a person likely to interpret the vision. At this time, we may suppose, Joseph to have been near ten years in prison, as he was, we are told, thirty years of age. He was accordingly brought in before Pharaoh. What a change is here? Joseph, who was sold for a slave, is now standing in the capacity of a prophet, before a Monarch, who is seated on a throne of ivory! or reclined on a couch of gold! His humility, in this instance, was as shining, as his chastity in another. "It is not in me, but God shall reveal it to the King." He gave the interpretation: he predicted seven years of great plenty, and seven years of extreme famine in the land. He advised Pharaoh to pre-

B 3

pare

pare food for the people, against the famine came, and the King took his advice, and put him over his business. Joseph was loaded with honours and riches, and made the next man to Pharaoh in the kingdom of Egypt. He dwelt in a palace of marble! Rode in a chariot of pearls! And Harbalds, with golden trumpets, cried to the people as he passed, "Bow the knee!" Thus, my young reader, you see how virtue was rewarded in this life.



CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Joseph's Administration in Egypt, down to the Commencement of the Famine.

ALTHOUGH Joseph was so highly exalted, he did not forget that he ought to be assiduous, as a saviour of the land. He did not act as too many statesmen do—consume his days in dissipation and riot. No; nor was useless extravagance a trait of his political character, though his coffers were filled with gold, and his cabinets sparkled with diamonds, and all the public treasuries were at his command; yet, he was more concerned in providing for the future wants of the land, than in making an ostentatious appearance; therefore, we do not read of his erecting for himself sumptuous edifices; but we have repeatedly noticed the accounts of his forming and filling store houses with good wheat, against

the seven years famine. Thus he gained the affection of the Egyptians, and even the envy of his courtiers was restrained by the general admiration of his virtues.

Potipherah was ruler of On, and supposed to officiate as priest; joining a religious with a regal character in one person. This Prince had a daughter, whose name was Asenath, who was given to Joseph in marriage, by whom he had two sons before the seven years of plenty was ended: these sons were called Manasseh and Ephraim, alluding to the good providences which had attended him, since he left his father's house.

But now the great famine commenced, and the people of the land were starving for want of bread. The dews no longer descended on the earth, and the wasted streams of the Nile, almost discovered the bottom of the channels in which they flowed;

the scorching sun burnt up the corn, and exhausted the trees of the vineyard of their sap. In this time of general calamity, the inhabitants of the land looked up to Joseph, as children to their father, that they might be fed. And he sold them corn for money; and thus, while he fed the people, enriched the public funds.

How truly honourable it is, for great men to convince their fellow creatures, they are of real service to them in time of necessity! Nor was the usefulness of Joseph confined to the nation in which he lived, for his wisdom, and the provision he had made, was spoken of through all the regions of the East.



C H A P. VIII.

Relating principally to Joseph's Relations.

THOUGH in our last we extolled Joseph's conduct, when raised to such a station of power and riches, yet some have pointed out what may be esteemed great defects, that attended so great

great a character. These, however, we shall pass over, because our thoughts of his character at so great a distance of time from the age in which he lived, must be drawn from his general conduct, and not from any single actions. And, indeed, if we were never allowed to conceive a man deserving of attention, without he was entirely free from fault or blame in every particular, we should never be able to present you with a conduct worthy of imitation. Therefore we must necessarily select the virtues of the brightest characters, from their vices, before we may universally follow them. Perfection shines like the sun in its meridian strength, but the best of men have only twinkled like glow worms: therefore David said, " I have seen an end of all perfection ;" which Dr. Watts has thus beautifully put into verse :

I've seen an end of what we call
Perfection here below,

How short the pow'rs of nature fall,
And can no farther go.

But, asking pardon for this digression, we must return to our subject.

The famine was not confined to Egypt, but its dreadful influence was felt in all the neighbouring countries. What shocking scenes may we now imagine were exhibited among the poor! picture to yourself, reader, children pining with hunger, crying to their parents for meat, when there was none to be obtained; while the father of an helpless family could do nothing, but, by incessant floods of tears, shew how much he felt their misery, and how unable he was to relieve them in their woe. But few persons know how dreadful a thing it is, for a large family to be extremely poor, and want bread to eat; yet, from the ideas we may form of such a situation, we ought certainly to be ready to lend them every assistance

that

that we can; remembering, that the bible says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor and the needy." In this time of general distress, Joseph's father, and the rest of his family, in the land of Canaan, felt severely. Having eat up all the provision which they could possibly raise in the land, they had almost given themselves up to despair. His sons, and their children, seemed to have given up all further endeavours to obtain food, and lived in the horrible expectation of shortly being famished. Perhaps at this time many melancholy reflections would steal into their minds, upbraiding them with their cruel and unwarrantable usage of Joseph: for conscience will torment wicked men, when they have reason to fear, that they are approaching the grave.

At this period, Jacob heard, that corn might be obtained in Egypt. News had been brought him, of the great provision which one of Pharaoh's

chief

chief favourites had made for the wants of the people; and how he sold the grain to all who came to him, that their lives might be spared.

This intelligence revived their drooping spirits, and ten of his sons immediately prepared themselves with asses, and whatever was necessary, to make a journey into Egypt, to procure corn. But they left Benjamin at home, to bear his father's company till they returned.

Now, methinks, they hasten on their way: sweet fields, or fruitful gardens, catch their eyes, or tempt their feet to linger. The land confounded with drought, presents a melancholy scene of desolation. And the barrenness of every meadow, through which they pass, warns them to quicken their steps, that they and theirs might be preserved from perishing. Thus imagining to ourselves, that they are nearly entering the land of Egypt, we shall conclude this chapter.

CHAP. IX.

The first Interview of Joseph and his Brethren in Egypt.

WHEN these ten brothers reached the capital city of Egypt, their first business was to enquire for the governor of the land, who had the power to sell corn to those who came from foreign parts. Now Joseph transacted the whole of this business himself; therefore they were immediately directed to him. We must here remark, that he now was known by a different name, which was given him by Pharaoh, as an honour conferred for his services. And when we recollect, that he had been in Egypt upwards of seventeen years, such alterations must have been made in his person, as to prevent his brothers from having any knowledge of him.

Perhaps

Perhaps it was a custom with Joseph to receive his audience in the morning of the day, to all strangers, who came from foreign countries. On these occasions we may picture to ourselves this exalted character, sitting in a splendid apartment, with all the ensignia of greatness around him: at his right hand stood the steward of his house, ready to receive his commands, and to communicate them to more menial servants; on his left hand, was his interpreter, a man deeply versed in languages, who told Joseph, in the Egyptian tongue, what the foreigners said in their own language; and likewise interpreted to him the answers of his Lord. The intense heat of the season and climate, rendered necessary the use of means that could be used, to keep the apartments cool: to effect this, the front is screened by nothing but a row of beautiful marble pillars, which support a triumphal arch, which was so contrived, as to prevent the entrance of the sun's beams.

This opened to a view of the gardens, where flowers, in graceful variety, adorn the mazy walks, and the rich foliage of a thousand trees form a most grateful shade. Here fountains incessantly play, and distant cascades faintly murmur through the grove.

Adjoining to the room, in which Joseph sat, was an extensive hall, where the architecture would easily prepossess the minds of strangers, with enlarged views of the beauty and strength of the whole mansion. This place was crowded with those who waited for admission to him. Among the rest, we may suppose his brothers stood, spending these moments of delay in conversation with those about them; and, perhaps, with particular enquiries concerning the person and address of the great personage they were about to be introduced to.

Presently they were admitted into his presence,
and

and as they came near to his seat, they kneeled down (according to the custom of the country) and bowed their heads nearly as low to the ground. Now, what pen is sufficient to describe the feelings of Joseph? The moment he entered, he knew them; and no doubt summoned all his fortitude to prevent the emotions of his mind, from being discovered by them. But for them, it was impossible they should have the least notion of him, owing to the length of time they had been separated, and the present magnificence of his appearance. When they bowed before him, instantly the dreams, which were mentioned in the second chapter, rushed into Joseph's mind, and for the moment rendered him incapable of speaking to them. But these sensations were entirely unknown to Joseph's servants. This leads us to remark the impossibility of reading in the countenance of men, the impressions under which their minds labour; and, indeed,

is well, that our feelings are not known to others, else we should be exposed to much greater perplexities than we are.





CHAP. X.

Joseph's Conduct towards his Brethren, &c.

WHILE they stood in this submissive way before Joseph, he said, with a lordly voice, "From whence do ye come?" And they answered, "Thy servants are come from the land of

Canaan; having families at home, starving for want of food, in this time of famine, we wish to buy corn that they may be supplied." Joseph, for reasons which do not appear sufficiently evident to determine what they were, was resolved to dissemble to them; and putting on a frown, cried out, "I suspect you intend to deceive me; and there being so many of you in one company, I suppose you are spies from some neighbouring Prince, come to make observations on the land in this distressed situation." At this an universal terror took possession of their spirits, and they replied, with trembling: "No, my Lord, do not take us to be such wicked persons, as to design to deceive my Lord; for we are all one man's sons, and being brethren, we thought it fit to come in company with each other." But Joseph exclaimed, "Away with all your excuses, for ye are spies, that are come to see the nakedness of the land."

And

And they said, "Not so, indeed, my Lord, for our father has twelve sons, and we ten he sent to Egypt to buy corn; and one of the remaining is dead, and the youngest is at home with his family this day." And Joseph answered, "It is well that you have given this description of your family for now (by the life of Pharaoh) ye shall be proved by this circumstance, and I shall know whether there is any truth in you." And he called to one of his guards, and ordered him to conduct them to prison; and having put them all into one dungeon, they were shut up, and were fed with the common allowance of prisoners. One remark is necessary here, upon the conversation of Joseph. It is to be feared, that his connections in Egypt had a tendency to draw him into very loose bits, or at least he seems to have conformed too much to the prevailing conversation of the court. Hence, in his last speech to his brethren, he asserts what he says, with the forcible expression,

"By the life of Pharaoh," which must be esteemed as a vain oath, which God has, in his law, forbidden to be used. And I hope this reflection may be of use, to teach my young readers, the importance of precaution in their language, as well as in their actions. But to return to Joseph's brethren. We may conceive somewhat of their unfeigned distress in the circumstances in which we left them. Reuben, the oldest of them, began with upbraiding them for obstinately persisting in their malice against Joseph, as he supposed the Lord was now about to punish them for that unimious transaction, though it was at such a distance of time. Their minds were all filled with terror, and their consciences loaded with guilt. Under the most gloomy apprehensions they spent the night, and the dawn of day did not much lessen their distress. Joseph on the third morning visited their dungeon, and while he heard them speaking of their family affairs to each other, without

without suspecting that he could understand their language, he was so affected with their situation that he was obliged to turn aside and weep in secret, before he could speak to them with composure.

Having collected his spirits, he ordered one of the men to be detained in prison, and bound with chains; while the rest should go back to their own land, with a sufficient quantity of corn for their present wants, and to return with their youngest brother Benjamin as soon as convenient; promising, that upon their return, Simeon who was to be detained, should be released. Accordingly, their sacks were filled, and they returned home.

CHAP. XI.

The Return of Jacob's Sons to their Father, &c.

HAVING laden their beasts with the sacks of corn, they left Egypt, and proceeded homewards. But the reader ought to be informed here, that Joseph had privately ordered the men who filled their sacks, to put each man's money, which he had paid for the corn, into the mouth of the sack. Perhaps he intended by this, merely to relieve their want of food, without making them any poorer than they were. When they had gone a considerable way, and stopped at an inn to refresh themselves and their beasts, one of them opened his sack to take out some corn, and behold! he found his money enclosed in the top of the sack. At this unexpected adventure they were filled with surprize, and much more so when they found that it was the same with every one's sack,

C

and

and that the whole of the money was restored. Each now began to form conjectures upon the circumstance; but the most prevailing opinion was, that the Egyptians had contrived this, that they might find occasion against them, to destroy them. These thoughts increased their torments, and made their journey homewards completely wretched.

With hearts oppress'd with guilt and woe,
To Canaan's distant land they go;
Their brother left, confin'd in chains;
Themselves sustain severer pains;
And, in the tidings which they bear,
Increase an aged parent's care.
The life, their food design'd to save,
Their news draws nearer to the grave.

And now, we may suppose, they have reached their father's house. But O, when good old Jacob had heard the doleful tidings of their rough

usage,

usage, by the Lord of the land; of their imprisonment; and that Simeon was left behind, and in prison too! he cried out, "Ye have robbed me of my children—Joseph is dead, and Simeon is bound in chains; surely my grey hairs will go down with sorrow to the grave." We have reason to think, from this expression, that Jacob suspected his sons had been guilty of some crime in Egypt, which caused them to be thus used; or, that they had taken away their money, which they said they had found in their sacks, by force or fraud. Indeed, he had great reasons for such suspicions, by their being so wicked in times past. This may teach children, that if they wish to avoid the hard thoughts, which their parents, or other persons might have of them, they must act so well in small, as well as great concerns, as to deserve their confidence. Persons are but seldom charged with crimes, who have never given a proof of their folly, and want of circumspection:

or even if they are charged with such, they may soon clear themselves from the imputation of guilt.

But to return to our story. They told their father, that the Lord of the country had commanded them, to bring Benjamin their brother down to him ; and that he promised to release Simeon, as soon as he saw their youngest brother. This was like a dagger to Jacob's heart, who loved Benjamin with an extraordinary affection ; and dreading the consequence of his leaving home, he absolutely refused to let him go. Reuben, who had two sons at home, and was concerned for the liberty of his brother Simeon, exclaimed, " Let him go with me ; and if I do not bring him back in safety to you, then kill my two sons, who shall be as hostages for him." We cannot but be astonished at these men, who could talk so deliberately of shedding blood.

However,

However, this could not prevail with Jacob, who would not consent to let Benjamin go ; and under this great affliction, he murmured against that gracious God, who had been his constant guide hitherto ; and said, " All these things are against me !"





C H A P. XII.

The second Journey of Jacob's Sons into Egypt, &c.

THE famine still continued; and indeed the state of the country was now worse than ever. Jacob's family had eaten up all the provision which was brought from Egypt, and began to have the dismal prospect again of perishing for want.

want. In this distress, Jacob once more entreated his sons to go into Egypt and buy a little food; perhaps expecting that when the governor saw them return, as honest men, he would release Simeon, and let him return with them. But Judah refused to go, unless his father would send Benjamin with them: For, said he, the man did solemnly protest, saying, "Ye shall not see my face except your younger brother is with you." Jacob for a long time argued against sending Benjamin; alledging, that they were exceedingly wrong in telling the man, they had another brother. Judah assured his father it was impossible to avoid telling the governor the whole truth, because he asked so many questions about their families and connections. At length Jacob yielded to commit Benjamin into the care of Judah, who promised faithfully to take the charge of him, and bring him back in safety. And now they were employed in making preparation for their

their journey. The first object of their care was, to make up a present for the governor, to whom they were going. Prudence ought always to dictate to us, the best means of approaching our superiors with acceptance. This present consisted of myrrh, almonds, spices, honey, and delicacies, which it is likely Egypt could not produce. These dainties however they had, when they had no bread. But these could not supply the want of that. Though we may lightly esteem our common food, such as plain bread, when we have plenty of every thing; yet we do well to consider, that in time of famine, we should cheerfully give away all our dainties for the sake of bread. And how much do they deserve to want wholesome food, who can without remorse waste and despise it!

Well! their next business was to take money. This they took double the quantity of what they took before: perhaps expecting the price of the

corn

corn might be raised, or else thinking to ransom Simeon out of prison, if that should be required. And besides this, they took the money which was before returned in their sacks, and thus set off for Egypt. Good Jacob, with his heart almost broken at their departure, looked after them as far as he could perceive them, and then burst out in this exclamation: "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin: if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved!"

Now the brothers hasten to Egypt, trembling at the apprehension of receiving further rough treatment from the governor; and preparing themselves to address him in a becoming manner. With palpitating hearts they pass over the once fertile, but now desolate land; and at length discern the rising turrets, and lofty edifices of the chief city of Egypt: here they repair, and

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wait

wait an opportunity of admission to Joseph. He, in the mean time, is assiduous as before, giving audience to strangers, and supplying the people of the land with corn. At length they obtain admission to him.—But here we must break off, and resume the subject in our next chapter.



CHAP.



CHAP. XIII.

The second Interview of Joseph and his Brethren, in the Palace; together with the Feast which he made for them, &c. &c.

JOSEPH, who was much taken up, with the concerns of the whole land, which lay upon him, was not able immediately to attend to their business.

business. But as he was going out (it might be to wait upon King Pharaoh) he ordered them to wait upon him again at noon. However, before he departed, he desired his steward, to get ready a splendid feast by his return, as he intended these men should dine with him. Now Simeon was released from his imprisonment, and brought with the rest of his brethren into Joseph's house. But even this filled them with fears, and fresh distress; for they now certainly thought, that by his taking so much notice of them, he intended to apprehend them on account of taking back their money the last time in their sacks. Therefore they determined to break this matter first themselves to Joseph's steward; and if possible make him their friend. So having called the man aside, they desired to speak with him on a subject of great importance; and one of them thus began: "O, Sir, we are indeed most unfortunate men, and every thing conspires to make us more wretched.

We came down to Egypt at first to buy corn, for the support of our families; and though we told my Lord, that we were brethren, the sons of the same father, in the land of Canaan, yet he took us for spies, and laid one of us in prison, and sent the rest home under promise of returning with our younger brother. And when we opened our sacks of corn, which we took from this country, behold! we found the money which we paid for the corn, in the mouths of our sacks. We do not know who put our money into the sacks; and though we are really innocent, yet we are afraid lest my Lord should apprehend and punish us as those who have intentionally defrauded him." The steward having heard this mournful story, desired they would be easy about the money; "For (saith he) I had your money for the corn; and as for that which you found in your sacks, it must be money which your God, in a miraculous way, has given you; therefore you need

need be under no fear whatever, for my will by no means injure you. Nay, as a token of esteem, he has ordered that you should dine with him to-day."

This conversation tended to quiet their minds, and they immediately began to prepare for entertainment, which Joseph proposed to give them at noon. Their beasts were provided and agreeable to the custom of the country, they washed their feet. And now they were all busy in getting ready the present which they brought, that they might deliver it in order to the governor, upon his return.

At length Joseph arrived, with all his retinue, and after he had gone to his own apartments, they were permitted to enter, and obtained an audience. They approached him with their presents in the name of their father; and, as before, they bowed themselves down even to the ground.

And Joseph, with much more familiarity than he had used towards them yet, asked them of their welfare, and concerning their journey, and of their families; and added, "Is your father well! the old man of whom ye spake to me? Is he yet alive?" And they answered him, saying, "Thy servant, our father, is yet alive, and he still enjoys good health." And as they spoke this, they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance to him. And thus was his dream fulfilled, when his family bowed before him: and even his father was acknowledged his servant. (See the account of that dream in chapter 2.) No doubt it came into Joseph's mind, as soon as he saw them in that posture. And turning his face towards them, he saw his brother Benjamin; and said to the others, "Is this your brother, of whom ye spake to me before?" And when they answered it was, he said, "God be gracious to me, my son!" But he now found himself almost

unable

unable to keep from discovering to them what was. The tears stood in his eyes, and his heart panted to be unburdened. But to prevent explanation at present, he went into a room at hand, and indulged his feelings, with a flood of tears.

At length he recovered, and having washed his face, went out to them again; and ordered his servants to bring forward the dinner. Accordingly three tables were set, one for Joseph, as master of the house, one for the Egyptians, who attended upon him, and another for the sons of Jacob, at the lower end of the room. The reason for thus separating them was, that the Egyptians would not eat with any Hebrews, because they were accustomed to kill and partake of their beasts which the Egyptians, through their ignorance, worshipped as Gods.

Joseph

Joseph, to shew his respect for Benjamin, and perhaps to try whether his brothers would envy his honour, as they had formerly done him—sent him five times as much meat as he did any of the others. Not that we can suppose he ate five times more than any of them, for that would make him a glutton; but perhaps this conduct of setting so much before him, was reckoned a great compliment in that age.

And now they are eating, and drinking, and merry. Therefore let us leave them, and

CHAP.



C H A P. XIV.

Further Particulars relative to Joseph and his Brethren, down to the Time when he discovered himself to them.

JOSEPH, being determin'd to detain his Brethren longer in Egypt, and to put their tempers to a farther test, contriv'd a scheme to

for his purpose. His steward was ordered to empty their sacks, and again to put every man's money into his sack ; and also, to put Joseph's silver cup into Benjamin's sack. Things being thus prepared, as soon as it was light in the morning, they pursued their journey homewards. No doubt, they returned with lighter hearts than they came with ; and with more joy and alacrity than they returned with to Canaan the last time.

Safe, they esteem a dang'rous way,
And light their burdens are ;
Because a smiling providence
Has banish'd all their care.

But all human felicity is transient, and is soon over. At times, when we rejoice the most, we are frequently on the brink of the greatest distress. So it was here : They conceived, that all their

tended to. When they had done speaking, the steward said, " Your offer is accepted, and you shall be dealt with according to your own words; therefore, we will begin the search." So they immediately unloaded their beasts, and opened their sacks, one by one; beginning with the sack of the oldest, and so proceeding regularly down to the youngest. And when they came to Benjamin's sack, the cup was found. But who can describe the terror and distraction which instantly seized the whole company? they, who were just before rejoicing in their supposed innocence, are now detected with the strongest marks of guilt and infamy. And, although they were fully conscious, that they were not really the aggressors, yet, according to their own desire, they were now left without hope of being released themselves; and with the gloomy apprehension of breaking their father's heart by their delay. This may teach us, to be very cautious in justifying

ing ourselves by hasty expressions and wishes, when we are brought to the test, and our innocence proved; for our uncautious words may produce greater trouble than we can at present be aware of. But to return to our story. There now left no way for their escape; so turning back again with the steward, they went with distressed minds, and dejected appearance, to the steward; and were once more brought before Joseph: now in the capacity of criminals, who had no expectations left, but that of hearing a sentence of punishment from his lips, and to be immediately removed to suffer the execution of it.

Joseph now assumed all that dignity and anger which his appearance, which might bespeak offended majesty: and said, " What! had you not only yourselves enough to rob me, but also ignorance enough to think I should not detect you? Do you think, a man of my station and character is

not capable of finding out your dark and wicked designs?" And Judah, standing up to speak to the rest, said, "What shall we say to my Lord? or how can we clear ourselves? Behold, we are all your slaves; both we, and the man to whom the cup was found." But Joseph answered: "No! God forbid, that I should punish innocent with the guilty! the man who had the cup, I will make a slave; but as for you, ye shall return to your father and families in peace. Then Judah, perceiving an inclination in Joseph's mind to shew mercy, took advantage of the opportunity; and drawing near to him, said, "My Lord, let thy servant speak a word in thy Lord's ear; and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art great and powerful, and Pharaoh! Thou didst compel us to bring our younger brother down to Egypt, or else we must have perished for want of food. Now our father had two sons, whom he particularly delighted in, and this was one, whom he called Benjamin; and the other, whose name was Joseph, went out into the fields, and was torn to pieces of wild beasts: Therefore, he set the whole of his affection upon Benjamin, and refused for a long time to let him come with us to Egypt, lest any mischief should befall him. And, indeed, when at last we persuaded him to let him go, we thought his aged heart would break at parting from him. And if we should return without him, as soon as he sees we have not our brother Benjamin with us, he will surely die, for his life is bound up in the life of the lad! And besides this, thy servant became a father for the lad unto his father: And I said, bringing him not back, and set him before thee, let me bear the blame for ever. Therefore, O my Lord, take pity on our father, and let me as a bond slave instead of Benjamin, and let him go with his brethren to his father; lest he see the evil which shall come upon my father!"

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This

This speech of Judah's had such an effect upon Joseph, that he could no longer restrain the tender emotions of his soul, but was obliged to make himself known to them. But this we reserve for the next chapter.



CHAP. XV.

Joseph makes himself known to his Brethren, and other Circumstances.

JOSEPH was too strongly affected to make any reply to what Judah had advanced. CHAP. His affections were in motion; his heart

melted into tenderness, and his eyes overflowed with tears. It was in vain to attempt to conceal from them any longer, what his burdened soul laboured to expose. So he immediately ordered, with a loud voice, all his servants and attendants to leave the room; which they having done, he first gave vent to his feelings, by weeping aloud, so that all who were in the house heard him, and were astonished at his apparent distress. All his brethren were filled with amazement at the unaccountable change in his behaviour, till by his words, as soon as he had power to speak, he surprized them still more: "I (saith he) am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" Nothing could sufficiently describe, the effect these words produced upon them. They found themselves, at that moment, in circumstances which before they had not the least conception of. Guilt and horror seized their minds, and confusion sat upon their countenances. Startled at so unexpected an

vent, they drew back, and almost questioned if what they heard and saw was real. But Joseph encouraged them to come near to him; and he said, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; and don't let the recollection of that wicked conduct of yours too much distress you; because it was the providence of God which brought me here, that I might be advanced to this great honour, to be as a father to Pharaoh the King; and an instrument of saving your lives in this time of famine." And with many such words he comforted them, and cheerfully entertained them that day. And the Egyptians were exceeding glad, and made merry, when they heard that the relations of Joseph were come down thither. Pharaoh, when he was informed of it, ordered, that they should take provision for their present wants, and go into Canaan, and bring down their father Jacob to Egypt, that he might be fed, and dwell in the very best of the land.

land. Accordingly, Joseph provided them with waggons, that might convey their father, and their families, and goods, down to Egypt. Besides these, he sent to Jacob a present of valuable things, and corn and bread, which loaded twenty asses. And to all his brethren he gave several suits of clothes; and to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver. So they left Egypt, and travelled towards their native country. And now they spend their time and way in talking of the strange providences, which had taken place since they came down to the land. Joseph, and his magnificence, employ their thoughts, and they rejoice at bearing the good news to their father, which they were now capable of. At length, after a prosperous journey, they arrive at home, and Jacob saw them with much joy, because it dispelled the gloomy apprehensions he had entertained.

But

But when they told him, that Joseph was yet alive, and that he was Lord over all Egypt, he would not believe it, but feared that they meant to impose upon him. However, after one of them had confessed the whole affair, concerning their selling him for a slave, and all the steps which brought him to this honour; and when he saw the waggons, and the present, which Joseph had sent to him, then he believed their words, and said, in an ecstasy of joy, "It is enough! Joseph, my son, is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

Here, reader, pause, and consider the foolishness of murmuring, and being fretful and discontented, when providences frown; because we see how soon God can alter our state, and make the most trying circumstances appear to be, in the end, wise and gracious dispensations!

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C H A P.



C H A P. XVI.

Jacob goes into Egypt; stands before Pharaoh; settles in the Land of Goshen, &c. &c.

HAVING soon settled all their concerns in Canaan, Jacob and his family set off in the charriages which Joseph had sent for them out of Egypt,

gypt, to take their journey to that nation. Having gone part of the way, God appeared to Jacob one night in a dream, and encouraged him to proceed on his journey; promising to be with him, and to bless him and his children, and to make them a great and mighty nation. With this promise of favour and protection, the old man cheerfully pursued his way, filled with the pleasing expectation of soon seeing his beloved Joseph, after a long absence of near forty years!

Judah went on before, and informed Joseph that his father Jacob was coming to him. Upon which, Joseph made ready his chariot, and went down to meet his father, and lighted upon him and his company, just as they entered Goshen, a province which lay just at the entrance of Egypt. Here a scene too affecting for full description, is presented to view. Overwhelmed with joy, the good old man is drowned in tears, and rendered

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incapable

incapable of expressing the conflicting feelings of his soul. Joseph, pierced with the sensations, at beholding the face of his father, furrowed with grief and age, fell upon his neck, and mingled his own tears with those of Jacob's. As soon as the first transport of passion abated, the good old patriarch exclaimed, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." We are here constrained to admire the leadings of divine providence, which after so many changes, thus brought all the concerns of this family to a happy issue. How little rationality do they shew, who attribute all these concerns and occurrences to blind chance, while wisdom and goodness shine so conspicuous through the whole! Joseph, having provided accommodations for his father and brethren, near the place where he first met them, he returned to the metropolis, intending to ask of the king, where his family should settle in Egypt. So he took five of his brethren, and

was introduced to Pharaoh; and informed him, that he had left his father and the rest of their families in Goshen. And Pharaoh ordered, that they should dwell in the land of Goshen, in the best of the land, and that they should be made overseers of his cattle.

After this, Joseph brought Jacob in before Pharaoh. And Jacob, with the simplicity of a patriarch, and the authority of old age, blessed Pharaoh in the name of Jehovah. The king, struck with his ancient form, and reverent appearance, enquired how old he was. To which Jacob answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." Who can help admiring the estimate this good man made of human life? How he speaks

of days and years, as equally fleeting and vain;
and how few he esteems that vast number of
years, which appear so prodigious in prospect.

How fast time steers his rapid course,
Without the least delay;
No artful wiles, nor strongest force,
Can e'er impede his way.

Thoughtless we glide with constant haste
Along th' impetuous stream;
Nor think, till all our days are fled,
That life is but a dream.

But to return to Jacob. We must notice, that
he and his children went and lived peaceable in
Goshen; and Joseph went on with his usual
transactions at Court; and so we conclude this
chapter.

CHAP.



CHAP. XVII.

Containing many very important Particulars.

JOSEPH continued to govern Egypt, through
the remaining years of the famine; which
was so great and general, that before the earth
became fruitful again, the inhabitants of the land
had

had sold their property, and themselves as slaves, in order to obtain bread to preserve them from perishing. In a few years after Jacob had settled in Egypt, he fell sick, and seemed on the point of death. So they sent for Joseph, to come and see his father, before he died. Joseph took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, with him, and went to take his last farewell of a dying parent. When Jacob saw him, he said, "Once I thought I should never see thy face any more, but behold God hath preserved my life till I have seen even thy children."

Joseph then brought his two sons near to his father, that he might lay his hands upon them and bless them. And he put Manasseh at Jacob's right-hand, and Ephraim at his left-hand, because Manasseh was the eldest. But Jacob crossed his hands, and laid his right-hand upon Ephraim, and his left-hand upon Manasseh; and

prophefied, that the family of Ephraim should be greater, and more honourable than that of Manasseh.

After this, Jacob called all his sons together, and blessed them; and foretold, what should come to pass concerning their respective families. And then he died in peace, and went to heaven, where good men rest from all the evils which attend them in this mortal state.

When Jacob was dead, his sons, by the permission of Pharaoh, took chariots and horsemen, and carried his body into Canaan, his native land, and buried him there. This funeral was conducted with great magnificence, and an almost universal mourning took place for old Jacob. Thus good men are beloved in their lives, and regretted at death! Some time after this melancholy circumstance, Joseph's brethren began to be afraid, that now their father

was

was dead, Joseph would be revenged on them for their cruel treatment of him so many years ago. To prevent this, they made fresh submissions to him, and professed their sincere sorrow for what they had been guilty of. But there was no need for this, for Joseph assured them, that every idea of revenge was obliterated from his mind, and that he considered it a wise and kind providence which first brought him into Egypt.

Joseph lived a great number of years, and several of his brethren died before him; but at length, he was taken ill, and was sensible of his approaching death. Upon which, he sent for the chief of his relations, and bound them by oath, that they should preserve his body, and carry it up with them to Canaan, whenever the voice of providence should call them out of Egypt, to possess the land which God had by promise given to them. So Joseph died, having great riches and

honours,

and being an hundred and ten years old. They embalmed his body with spices and perfumes of every kind, which could preserve it from decay, and put it in a coffin, ready to be removed at any period, according to his own desire. We have thus finished the task we undertook, and only add,

Learn to revere the road to life,
And seek to walk therein;
All evil ways detest, and shun
The dang'rous paths of sin.

Thus you'll obtain true peace on earth,
And when death close your eyes,
Will rise to drink immortal joys,
Beyond the azure skies.

REFLECTIONS upon the foregoing History, taken from Robertson's Scripture Characters.

1. **T**HAT many of God's dearest children may be the greatest sufferers. Neither is outward prosperity any mark of the Lord's favour, nor are the severest trials any token of his displeasure. We have beheld Joseph, a pious and amiable youth, of irreproachable manners, hated by his brethren, through their cruelty banished from his father's house, sold as a slave in a foreign land, dismissed from his master's service with disgrace, loaded with chains as a vile malefactor, not restored to his liberty, till thirteen years had elapsed, from the time that he left his native country. In such a situation, who would not have concluded, "The Lord hath forsaken or forgotten me?" Unbelief would have suggested to us, "We have cleansed my heart in vain." But it has appeared,

that Joseph was the object of God's constant and peculiar care; that he received from him singular proofs of his kindness; and that, by these very afflictive dispensations, he was prepared for future greatness, and even his promised exaltation brought about. Shall we say, that this was an uncommon case? Is it not, rather, the usual method of the divine providence? We remember it is written, "That we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," and that "our affliction," (heavy and long as it may seem) "is light and but for a moment, and worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We perceive

2. That the judgments of God, which are all ordered in wisdom, and are, like Himself, "holy, just, and good," are yet very mysterious to us. We see but very little of the designs of his government.

vernment, and that little, darkly. We must wait till the consummation of all things, in order to form any consistent opinion; and then how amazing will the plan appear, when the whole shall be laid before us!

In the case of Joseph, it has pleased God to discover his own purpose, and the very remarkable steps, by which that purpose was effected. His aim, from the beginning, was to exalt Joseph; and this would have been easy for him in a thousand ways. But he chooses, for the display of his own glory, to make the very opposition of his enemies the means of accomplishing his will; and thus he proves, that "there is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."

We are hereby also instructed, that matters of the highest importance both to ourselves and to all the world may take their rise from circumstances

which at first appear of the smallest moment. What a chain of events do we behold in this history, wonderfully connected together, and necessarily depending one upon another, and leading to an issue of the greatest magnitude! Had not Joseph dreamed; had he not imprudently told his dreams; had he not visited his brethren; had not Reuben and Judah given the advice they did; had not the Ishmaelites passed by at the evening time, bought him, and carried him into Egypt; had he not been sold to Potiphar, tempted by his mistress, cast into prison; had not the prisoners and Pharaoh also dreamed, Joseph would not have attained to his very high exaltation. These preceding dispensations, at least, were the appointed means of raising him to the government of a very powerful nation, of preserving that whole country, and many others likewise, from perishing by famine; of supporting the family of Jacob in particular; and of thus continuing

tinuing the line, from which it was decreed, the Saviour of the world should come ; and, therefore, of accomplishing the redemption of mankind. On such apparently trifling and casual circumstances may our comfort and safety, our life and our salvation itself depend. O, let us trust and praise the Lord God of Israel, " who only doeth wondrous things," and to him let us cheerfully commit the keeping of our souls, beseeching him, that all events may tend to bring us nearer to himself, and prepare us for his own everlasting kingdom.

THE END.

